techno-economic viability and feasibility of large scale production of feed stock based on jatropha;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) The Committee on Development of Bio-fuels set up by Planning Commission in July, 2002, *inter-alia*, examined the techno-economic viability and feasibility of large scale production of feed stock based on Jatropha. Based on the report of the Committee on Development of Bio-fuels submitted to Planning Commission in April, 2003, a National Mission on Bio-diesel has been envisaged. With a view to demonstrating the commercial vibility of Jatropha & Karanj plantations as inputs for production of bio-diesel, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Demonstration Programme of National Mission of Bio-diesel has been formulated by the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development.

Committee for welfare of farmers

3038. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up a Committee to look into the problems of farmers in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of issues to be considered by the said Committee?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) No, Sir, However, the Government set up in February, 2004 a National Commission on Farmers to examine and recommend policies, programmes and measures on various issue confronting Indian farmers and to suggest appropriate interventions for improving the economic viability and sustainability of diversified agriculture including horticulture, livestock, dairy and fisheries. The Commission was reconstituted in November, 2004 and assigned revised terms of reference mentioned below:—

> Work out a comprehensive medium-term strategy for food and nutrition security in the country in order to move towards the goal on universal food security, over time.
>
> Propose methods of enhancing the productivity, stability and sustainbility of the major farming systems of the country, based

on an agro-ecological and agro-climatic approach and the harnessing of frontier technologies.

Bring about synergy between technology and public policy and recommend measures for enhancing income and employment potential in rural areas through diversification, application of appropriate technology including IT for information on market, weather, credit facilities and e-commerce, training and market reforms.

Suggest measures to attract and retain educated youth in farming and recommend for this purpose methods of technological upgrading of crop husbandry, horticulture animal husbandry, fisheries (inland and marine), agro-forestry and agro- processing and associated marketing infrastructure.

Suggest comprehensive policy reforms designed to enhance investment in agri-research, substantially increase flow of rural credit to farmers including small and marginal, triggering agricultural growth led economic progress, which can lead to opportunities for a healthy and productive life to rural families;

Formulate special programmes for dry land farming for farmers in the arid and semi-arid regions, as well as for farmers in hilly and coastal areas in order to link the livelihood security of the farming communities living in such areas with the ecological security of such regions. Review in this context all ongoing Technology Missions like those relating to pluses, oilseeds, maize, cotton, watershed etc. and recommend methods of promoting horizontal integration of vertically structured programmes. Also, suggest credit-linked insurance scheme which can protect resource poor farm families from unbearable risks. Further, suggest methods of strengthening and streamlining the National Horticulture Development Board.

Suggest measures for enhancing the quality and cost competitiveness of farm commodities so as to make them globally competitive through providing necessary facilities and application of frontier sciences and promote quality literacy for codex alimentarius standard, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures among farmers through reorienting and retooling extension machinery. Also suggest methods of providing

adequate protection to farmers from imports, when international prices fall sharply.

Recommend measures for the credit, knowledge, skill, technological and marketing empowerment of women, taking into consideration the increasing feminization of agriculture and the proposed conferment of right to land ownership.

Suggest methods of empowering male and female members of elected local bodies to discharge effectively their role in conserving and improving the ecological foundations for sustainable agriculture, like hand, agro-biodiversity and the atmosphere, with priority attention to irrigation water.

Recently an Agriculture Coordination Committee has also been constituted under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister to evolve a systematic approach to policy formulation on issues pertaining to agriculture and to promote iinter-sectoral and inter- departmental coordination in planning and implementation. In addition, a Sub-Committee of National Development Council on "Agriculture and Related Issues" under the Chairmanship of Union Agriculture Minister is already in place to draw implementable action plans for the development of agriculture sector.

Revising Support Price for Agricultural Produces

3039. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the agriculture sector in the country is passing through an acute phase;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether with a view to providing relief to the farmers, the Central Government propose to revise the support price for the agricultural produce; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) As per the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), the share of agriculture sector (i.e. agriculture, forestry and fishery) in India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant (1999- 00) prices stands at 19.7% in 2005-06 compared to 24.4% in